

Wrelton Village Hall AGM – Tuesday 13th October 2020

Chair's Report

I am going to approach the Chair's report, my first, in a slightly different format as the time since the last AGM in May 2019 has been in very distinct sections punctuated by significant events – each period having different aspects to report.

Following the AGM in May one of our major aims was to promote the hall as a community hub and facility by increasing usage of the hall by hiring groups but also increasing the number of events for villagers to attend.

Building on the installation of wifi in the hall we started plans for facilitate film screenings and talks/presentations in the hall by investing in audio visual equipment such as a projector, laptop, screen and speakers and bought a projector to this effect.

We hosted a jazz concert by Ian Millar and Dominic Spencer in September, and the Harvest supper with Monkeystick providing the entertainment in October, a Christmas gathering in December. All events were well attended and received positive feedback. We also started to make plans for a Village show in the summer of 2020 led by Helen Young.

As well as our regular hall users we welcomed Little Stars Toddler Group, two mornings a week.

In terms of repair and maintenance the damp proofing in the entrance hall was undertaken and the small meeting room was decorating. Many thanks go to Peter Renshaw who co-ordinated the work and to Peter and his team who carried it out and transformed both the entrance and the meeting room. Having such committed volunteers who lend their time and expertise is an essential lifeline in keeping the hall financially viable and we value their contribution immensely

During this period planning started to upgrade the playground which had then been open for nearly 10 years. It was clear that wear and tear in the guise of rot on the climbing frame needed addressing and this was confirmed in the annual inspection. Unfortunately, contributions to the upkeep of the playground via the donations box had continued to decline despite a new sign encouraging users to contribute so we approached the Parish Council who have agreed to make an annual grant towards the upkeep of the playground. Further work is still needed to replace the climbing frame and although financial support has been pledged to support this we still await news of a Community grant bid to facilitate this.

In September we also welcomed Sandra Snell to the Village hall committee who has brought a new perspective to the group having been involved in the running of a village hall before she moved to Wrelton.

Fund raising for the defibrillator in the village, mentioned in last year's report continued and the target was achieved to order and install the device on the wall of Beech Farm Cottages. Many thanks to Sue Halstead for leading on this and again to Graham and Kirstie Kirk for providing the location and power supply. The defibrillator has now been up and running for some months with Sue and Phil Hanby doing the routine checks. A training session is planned but has been postponed until such a meeting is again allowed

Section 2

Before Christmas Jan Firth stood down from the position of Chair and resigned in January from the Village hall committee for personal reasons. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Jan again for her huge contribution in running the Village Hall over the past years (3 and a half as Chair and time before then). She was proactive in the Chair and has made a big difference in pushing forward on maintenance, rationalising the inner sanctum and improving the facilities – such as the upgrade in the chairs. In her resignation letter she expressed the possibility of rejoining the committee at a future date and I hope we will see her back at some point. The first months of 2020 continued as before except for the change in Chair with me (Kathy Waddington) assuming the role temporarily, having been vice Chair for some time. Helen Youngs assumed the role of Vice Chair.

In order to continue to promote the use of the village hall we hosted an Open Day on 25th January as part of the national village halls week when villagers and potential hirers were invited to come along for a bowl of soup and have a look at the facilities on offer and find out about groups and events. This was supported by an article in the Gazette and Herald Despite the excellent photo of Tony, Helen and Jeanette, turn out was modest although it was a success as a social gathering on a gloomy January lunchtime even if everyone who attended already knew about the village hall.

February we had a sell out performance from Paula Marie, the vintage vocalist (with another performance planned for the Autumn of 2020. Plans for the Village show in August were taking shape with all sections sponsored, judges appointed and programmes planned. Thank you to Helen for all the work on this. Tickets had sold out for A night at the Panto by Dominic Goodwin scheduled for March with another play by him planned for the Autumn. A date was agreed for a pie and pea supper/ games night in May. During this time also Tony was working on developing the Village online profile through a website and Facebook. Many thanks to Tony for all the work in establishing those.

However, we hadn't banked on Covid 19 and with lockdown in late March the village hall and playground had to close its door for the foreseeable future. Under the umbrella of the Village Hall committee arrangements were made to form a support network for anyone shielding or in need of help. A letter was distributed to every household. The website (alongside a new village facebook page) then became invaluable in sharing information such as businesses delivering to the village and in sharing the weekly lockdown quiz which many people enjoyed and found hugely beneficial in maintaining contact with others and exercising the brain. Many thanks to Helen for coordinating the quiz, Tony for the technical wizardry and Sue, Jeannette, Tony, Gayle and Kathy for forming the support network. Many residents of the village were very appreciative of the proactive role the village hall took.

All events that were planned had to be cancelled and the rental from regular groups dried up which meant a total loss of income for the hall from mid- march to reopening. Luckily, we were eligible for a small business grant which offset this and has allowed us to support regular users after reopening.

Some projects were able to go ahead and Peter Renshaw cleared the side garden in preparation for planting roses paid for with the money donated by Bernard Sellars in Autumn 2019 in memory of his wife Mavis.

Village Halls were able to reopen in July but we decided to wait until September when all Covid 19 adaptations were fully in place. A sub group of the committee met to agree risk assessments, special conditions of hire, purchase equipment and prepare the village hall to function in this strange Covid world. I need to mention ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and Community First via their Facebook group who have been invaluable in supporting us in navigating the ever changing

mire of regulations and guidelines. The village Hall is now open to the regular users although most are having to operate with reduced numbers and according to Covid adaptations. Most one off bookings such as birthday parties and musical and theatrical productions are still not possible due to either the nature of the event or reduced hall capacity to allow for social distancing.

I'd like to finish by sharing the findings from the Parish plan revisited which was a survey carried out in 2019 by the Parish Council as a follow up to the Parish Plan in 2008

One of three areas that was deemed most important in the Parish was for the village halls to be retained as key venues for local groups and community events and 76% of Wrelton respondents to the survey responded that it was very important.

I quote:

The village halls to be retained as key venues for local groups and community events Evident from the 2019 survey and subsequent events, our two village halls are key assets within, and provide many social benefits for, our communities. Both the upkeep of the halls and their surrounds, and many social events are provided by volunteers, and the more that step forward to help the better for all. Unforeseen at the time of the review was the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the upshot of which has been the important role of the two village hall committees and village newsletters as hubs for providing support and important information for the communities.

I hope this reassures committee members that the time and effort they all voluntarily expend on maintaining the village hall as a community hub is worthwhile and I thank them for their commitment.

Which brings me to the final point which is Peter Renshaw who is resigning from the Village Hall committee at this AGM after many years' service. We will miss him greatly as his contribution has been huge – maintenance, cleaning, bartender, interior designer, gardener to name but a few of the roles he has undertaken and I would like to pass on heartfelt thanks from everyone.

Kathy Waddington - Acting Chair, Wrelton Village Hall Committee - October 2020